



STAFF HIGHLIGHTS

Internal Communique ■ State Schools for Severely Handicapped

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State Schools for Severely Handicapped
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Charlie Taylor,
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Information concerning other available resources, programs, etc., is not to be construed as an endorsement by State Schools for Severely Handicapped for any specific product, organization or philosophy.

What You Do Matters

By Charlie Taylor, Central Office

I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself. My name is Charlie Taylor, and this past spring I was hired as superintendent of the State Schools program. I am very excited to have been selected for this position and have enjoyed my time here since starting work on July 1.

I have always had a strong interest in special education as evidenced by my previous professional positions: special education teacher, DESE special education compliance supervisor, special education director, director of a special education cooperative and school superintendent. These experiences have given me a great appreciation of the State Schools system and the work that you do in providing educational services

to students with severe disabilities. I am proud to be a part of this effort.

I hope that your school year has started off on a positive note. I always get excited at the beginning of each year. New beginnings provide new opportunities for creativity and innovation. I recently heard Dr. D. Kent King, Commissioner of Education for the state of Missouri, give a speech on the theme "What We Do Matters." His speech captured my attention, and what he said was exactly right. Regardless of our job assignments, we are all presented with numerous opportunities to improve the lives of our students. I encourage you to seize these opportunities while knowing that what you do matters.

State Schools has a written mission statement that clarifies our purpose. In part, this statement says that we are to "provide leadership and promote excellence in education and lifelong learning." To me, this simply means that our purpose is to help our students have brighter futures. Such a goal is worthy of our best efforts, and I believe all of our energy should be either directly or indirectly focused on achieving this goal.

I know that this school year will

present more than just positive events. Each of us will be given problems to solve. We might experience frustration, face conflict and feel pressure. It would be nice if none of us had to experience negative emotions, but that would not be realistic to expect.

As humans, we do experience these emotions. My challenge to each one of you is this — when faced with the problems and frustrations that will surely arise, continue to direct your efforts toward helping our students learn.

Your continued, persistent focus on student achievement will result in better lives for our students. This matters a great deal. We will achieve amazing things over the course of the 2006-07 school year if we can maintain this focus.

I hope you have a year filled with joy, happiness and an appreciation of those with whom you work. I especially hope you improve the lives of our students by helping them learn new and important skills. I wish you a wonderful school year.

"I hope you have a year filled with joy, happiness and an appreciation of those with whom you work."

Authentic Assessment of Challenging Behaviors

By Barbara Stevens, Central Office

Under the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA), school districts are now required to conduct functional behavioral analyses of problem behaviors. For many years, behavior modification (or behavior management) has viewed such behavior as being a problem to fix or something the student is doing that needs correcting. Behavior management strategies are effective in helping the student learn new behaviors, but the strategies do not address the purpose behind the old behavior.

A failure to focus on the purpose often results in the challenging behavior surfacing in another form. Adults then find themselves trying to suppress a cycle of challenging behavior. People might comment, "That's just the way this student is," or "This student has always done this behavior." The challenging behavior becomes viewed as a personality trait of the student. In reality, nothing has changed, and the behavior still gets in the way of learning.

With authentic assessment of challenging behaviors, determining the purpose behind the behavior provides clues as to the adult actions and/or environmental influences that need to be changed so the student does not have to resort to such extreme actions to communicate that a problem exists. Challenging behaviors are never the student's fault or a personality trait. All behaviors serve a function and contain a message from the student, who might not understand a better method of communicating the message. In fact, the student uses behavior that adults have unintentionally reinforced because it has become the most effective and efficient manner for the student to achieve the desired outcome.

What is authentic behavioral assessment?

This approach comes from functional analysis in the field of applied behavior analysis. It identifies the cause, or purpose, of behavior before developing an intervention based on the hypothesis for the behavior. In essence, the assessment helps determine the intervention and decreases the amount of guesswork in addressing challenging behavior.

Objectively assessing behavior without a personal bias is not as simple as one might think. Authentically assessing a challenging behavior requires evaluating the student, the actions of the adult and the environment in order to identify what is influencing the challenging behavior. Objective analysis must ensure that preconceived notions about the challenging behavior do not unduly influence the actual hypothesis for the behavior.

Why assess functional behavior?

Ineffective and unnecessarily restrictive procedures often result from a failure to base interventions on the specific purpose behind the behavior. For example, consider the case of a student who refuses to complete a task by throwing the material and striking the teacher. Following the behavior management approach, the teacher would give the student a timeout or a similar consequence. If any strategy like this is used, the student has achieved exactly what was desired: avoidance of the task. The teacher has reinforced that throwing objects will get the student out of an undesirable task.

Intervention strategies can be determined by assessing why the student does not want to complete the task and identifying what must change so the student no longer needs to use the behavior. For example, a student is given 15-minutes worth of work, but he throws the materials on the ground after five minutes. This

happens repeatedly at different times of the day with different activities and different adults near the student. The teacher concludes that the purpose is to communicate that the student does not like working for more than five minutes at a time. The teacher might not fully understand why the student dislikes working for an extended period of time, but this assessment can be used to effectively modify work expectations by giving the student tasks in three-minute time slots. The student then works successfully for three minutes at a time, and the need for the challenging behavior has been eliminated.

Some might view this solution as allowing the student to get away with behavior that should not be tolerated. However, if the aim of the student is not to do the task, the student achieves the goal if the consequence for unacceptable behavior is to be removed from the work table. The consequence inadvertently becomes a reward for the challenging behavior.

If the intervention stops here, the student learns to complete tasks presented but not to tolerate more than three minutes of work. This is where authentic assessment and behavior management come together. When the teacher gradually extends the work period or increases the number of tasks or steps to be completed, the student learns the new skill of work persistence. Adequate functional behavioral assessments eliminate inappropriate interventions and help avoid battles of wills between students and adults.

Where to begin?

The systematic and direct observation of a student's actions is the best approach when beginning to address challenging behavior. The student's behavior must be objectively observed in his or her natural environment, and the behavior's

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Winners Announced for Bus Poster Contest

By Stephanie Brooks, Central Office

This year, five schools – Cedar Ridge, Dogwood Hills, Gateway/Hubert Wheeler, Mississippi Valley and Oakview – participated in the annual Missouri Association for Pupil Transportation (MAPT) poster contest. These schools submitted a total of 17 posters.

The first-place winner in the special education category was Crystal Mitchell from Cedar Ridge. In October, her poster will be entered in a national contest sponsored by the National Association for Pupil Transportation.

Although MAPT no longer awards second- and third-place prizes, staff at Central Office felt that other students

also deserved recognition for their posters. Therefore, among entries from the five participating schools, the second- and third-place winners were Dedire Maple from Mississippi Valley and Nathan Hammers from Oakview. Congratulations to all students who created a poster for this contest.

The rules and theme of the next contest will be publicized by Central Office in the spring.

Many of our students are capable of making posters if given the opportunity. Because few schools in



The first-place poster by Crystal Mitchell of Cedar Ridge

Missouri submit posters in the special education category, a student from State Schools has a strong chance of being selected as the winner.

The judges for the contest also understand that writing the words for the theme can be challenging for our students. They allow a certain degree of assistance on this required part of the poster. ♦

Authentic Assessment

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antecedents and consequences must be analyzed. This type of observation is called ABC (antecedent-behavior-consequence) analysis, which means to note what occurred right before the challenging behavior was seen, the behavior itself and what happened right after the behavior. The key to ABC analysis is to be objective and to avoid attaching blame to what the student does. This is one way to see the purpose behind challenging behavior by showing patterns, known as precursors, that influence the behavior.

Direct observation does not always provide a clear picture of a behavior's purpose. If this is the case, systematically manipulating various environmental events becomes necessary. The most common way to manipulate the environment is to place the student in several different situations and carefully observe how the behavior changes.

For example, to determine the reason behind noncompliance, change the location and variety of activities and collect data to reveal the situations in which the student responds the longest. The teacher might offer sedentary, manipulative tasks that are followed by high-energy motor activities and concluded with sensorial activities. Observation would include leaving the student alone to see which materials are accessed and how the student fills free time. Activities that maintain student interest would be identified, and then additional activities with similar characteristics could also be identified. Data could be collected on the duration of successful compliance skills to determine at what level work expectations should be set.

What does research tell us about positive behavioral support?

According to author Cynthia Warger, more than 100 research articles involving individuals with various cognitive disabilities were synthesized, and the research revealed:

- Authentic assessment of challenging

behaviors is widely applicable to individuals with serious, challenging behaviors.

- Authentic assessment (functional analysis) contributes to knowing how to use the results of assessments to correct environmental and adult influences.
- Positive behavioral support was effective in reducing problem behavior by 80 percent in two-thirds of the cases reviewed in the research.
- Success rates are higher when intervention is based on prior functional assessment.

Our instructional initiative this year is authentic learning, and the new BASIC program is intended to provide support to the educational staff. Staff members will assist students in learning new alternatives for the communication of behavioral needs and in shaping new skills.

(For more information, read Cynthia Warger's article "Positive Behavior Support and Functional Assessment," located at <http://ericec.org/digests/e580.html>, and visit <http://www.beachcenter.org>.) ♦

MAP-A 2006-07: Answers to Your Questions

By Karen Wells, Central Office

To assist you in understanding the MAP-A changes for 2006-07, here are answers to questions you might have:

When will I receive MAP-A 2005-06 results, and what information will be provided?

MAP-A 2005-06 results will be sent out by September 20. There will be a parent report provided to parents explaining the process and results. In addition, there will be a teacher report for each MAP-A that explains the results for each student and gives informative comments to assist in developing future MAP-A portfolios.

What changes are being made to the MAP-A for 2006-07?

- Data will be collected during two, instead of three, collection periods. Each collection period will last four weeks, and data will be collected three times during each of the two

collection periods.

- The forms have changed slightly. There is still a data-summary sheet to be completed for each Alternate Performance Indicator (API). But, there is only one type of work-record form to be completed with a check box at the top of the form to indicate if an actual student product is attached. Also, the evaluation of a student's performance is separated into two sections: one section is specific to the level of accuracy and the other to the level of independence.
- The dates for enrollment have changed and will be from Oct. 9 to Oct. 27. Enrollment will be online and should be submitted by each school to Karen Wells, assistant director for program services, at Central Office. Specific directions for enrollment will be provided to each building administrator.
- Dates for MAP-A implementation and submission have changed:
 - » Collection periods — Jan. 8 to Feb. 2 and Feb. 5 to March 2
 - » Submission date — submitted by building administrators and postmarked by UPS or FedEx no later than March 12.
- ProFile has been updated. ProFile is the computer program in which all MAP-A data is documented. It is important that the ProFile 2005-06 program is deleted from all computers and that only the ProFile 2006-07 program is used during this school year.
- There will be a MAP-A science pilot for grades 5, 8 and 11 conducted during the same time period for MAP-A communication arts and math. State Schools will be participating in this pilot on a voluntary basis.

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MAP-A 2006-07 Timeline

September	MAP-A 2005-06 results and comments will be sent to teachers. This information should be useful in completing future MAP-A portfolios. Central Office will review the results of all reports and address issues that appear to be statewide or areawide. Central Office will provide any needed information and in-service materials. All volunteers for the MAP-A science pilot will submit information to building administrators regarding students in grades 5, 8 and 11 who are participating in the program.
October	Information will be provided to building administrators regarding students who are participating in MAP-A. MAP-A participants include all students in grades 3-8 for communication arts and math, grade 10 for math and grade 11 for communication arts. Staff will be given additional training by building administrators regarding changes to MAP-A.
September – December	APIs will be selected for students; and lessons, materials and strategies will be determined and developed. Teaching the skills targeted by APIs should be an ongoing process. APIs do not have to be connected to IEPs, but it is most beneficial if they are connected.
Jan. 8 to March 2	Implementation and documentation of MAP-A – data will be collected during two collection periods from Jan. 8 to Feb. 2 and Feb. 5 to March 2. Data will still be documented three times during each collection period. Data collection does not have to be spread out over the entire collection period; data can be collected on consecutive days. Also, data does not have to be collected for all students at one time. Most importantly, the input of data into the ProFile program should be done throughout the collection period.
March 12	MAP-A portfolios must be submitted and postmarked no later than March 12.
September – June	The curriculum will be used to develop IEPs to include APIs as goals/benchmarks for math and communication arts as appropriate and to teach the selected essential skills.

MAP-A 2006-07

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What trainings and supports for MAP-A will be provided during the 2006-07 school year?

Local trainings will be led by Regional Professional Development Center (RPDC) representatives. Building administrators and area directors will attend a training session during September or early October. New information will then be provided to classroom teachers by the building administrators. RPDC representatives

will also be available throughout the school year to answer questions and possibly provide trainings and follow-up sessions at schools.

Wells will also be the MAP-A coordinator for State Schools. Planned assistance and services regarding MAP-A from the coordinator include:

- RPDC training enrollment information for building administrators and area directors
- MAP-A student enrollment information and assistance
- a training CD for each building administrator to use in providing staff in-services on MAP-A changes

and implementation

- conference calls with building administrators and area directors
- a question-and-answer session led by the coordinator and an RPDC representative at one of the building administrator meetings
- availability throughout the school year to answer questions as needed.

The State Schools curriculum is being revised and will include Grade Level Expectations (GLEs) and APIs in addition to IEP goals/benchmarks and suggestions for authentic teaching activities. ♦

Authentic Learning

By Merv Blunt, Central Office

On July 1, 2006, the fourth cycle of the Missouri School Improvement Program (MSIP) began. Although there were only a few changes and additions from the third cycle, there has been a change in the focus of the MSIP review. From now on, there will be less emphasis on compliance and paperwork and more emphasis on improvement in student performance. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA) and the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) are responsible for this change.

Given the focus of the fourth cycle of MSIP, State Schools must solidify the focus of its instructional program. We

need to identify how our instructional program is aligned and how the process is to be used to review and revise the instructional program.

The first initiative has been to align the instructional program with authentic learning and assessment. As developed by Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe, authentic learning and assessment served as the basis for the book "Understanding by Design," a process and format for curriculum development. Two of the essential principles of authentic learning are:

- All students' learning is based on the real-life skills necessary to be successful in their postsecondary lives.

- A teacher's primary educational responsibility is to cause learning. (Traditionally, the teacher's primary responsibility has been to teach.)

There are nine principles of authentic learning that State Schools will address during this school year. The first four principles are:

- Not student's fault
- Prior knowledge
- Uncoverage
- Real-life skills

The chart below provides examples of what a traditional teacher and a teacher of authentic learning might say. These quotes provide insights into the differences between the two approaches. ♦

	Not student's fault	Prior knowledge	Uncoverage	Real-life skills
Traditional approach	"He is being stubborn." "He just doesn't want to do this."	"We don't do this in my class." "I don't know where last year's teacher was heading with this goal." "Why did they pick that last year?"	"She can't do that."	"One size fits all." "One skill fits all."
Authentic learning	"Why isn't he getting this? Let me look at the situation and rethink a few things."	"What is the next skill he needs to be able to do this?"	"What skills does she need to do that?"	"He doesn't need to know this at the day activity center. We need to pick another skill."

Praxis Test Dates

For the 2006-07 school year, the following are the test dates offered by ETS. Information on the Praxis tests can be obtained from ETS at (800) 772-9476 or by visiting <http://www.ets.org/praxis>. (Please refer to the March 2006 issue of *Staff Highlights* for more information on the Praxis courses required for special education certification.) ♦

Test date	Registration received by	Late registration received by	Approximate mailing date for results of test
Sept. 16	Aug. 10	Aug. 17	Oct. 17
Nov. 18	Oct. 19	Oct. 26	Dec. 19
Jan. 13	Dec. 14	Dec. 21	Feb. 13
March 3	Feb. 1	Feb. 8	April 3
April 28	March 29	April 5	May 29
June 9	May 10	May 17	July 10
Aug. 4	July 5	July 12	Sept. 4

HEALTH

Easy Exercises to Relieve Stress

By Claudia Rampley, Central Office

According to the American Institute of Stress, stress is responsible for 75 to 90 percent of all visits to the doctor.

What is stress? Stress is our response to daily life. The proper amount of stress is a positive force. It helps us to do our best work and keeps us alert, energetic, focused and engaged in the world around us. On the other hand, too much stress leaves us tense, anxious and uncomfortable.

Stress cannot be completely avoided. Yet if high levels of unwanted stress are not managed properly, an individual's health and sense of well-being could suffer.

Simple, regular relaxation routines can help relieve stress. Some examples are:

- **Breathe deeply** – Deep breathing is one of the easiest and most natural (yet most overlooked) stress-relief methods. Take in a deep breath through your nose, hold for a count of four and then exhale through your mouth for a count of four. Repeat this exercise 20-30 times.

- **Head and neck roll** – Relax your shoulders. Let your head roll forward, and rest your chin on your chest. Slowly rotate your head in a circle without straining your neck. Repeat five times, and relax. Then rotate in the opposite direction, and repeat five times.

- **Arm stretch** – Raise your arms above your head, fingers interlaced and palms facing up. Push up as far as you can. Hold for 10 seconds, and relax. Repeat five times.

- **Ear to shoulder** – Sit with your spine straight, your chin resting on your chest and both feet flat on the floor. Inhale deeply. As you exhale, slowly roll your left ear toward your left shoulder. Inhale deeply and exhale slowly, rolling your chin back to your chest. Then inhale deeply and exhale slowly, rolling your right ear to your right shoulder. Inhale deeply and exhale slowly, rolling your chin back to your chest. Relax, and then repeat five times.

- **Back stretch** – Lie on your back, keeping your knees bent and your feet flat on the floor. Gently push your lower back so that it touches the floor. Hold for 10 seconds, and relax. Repeat five times.

These simple exercises can help you deal with stress in the workplace and in other areas of your life.

HUMAN RESOURCES

(All by Cheri Landers, Central Office)

Maximum Annual Leave

Personnel Policy 200-210 states that employees cannot have an annual-leave balance of more than two-years worth of accrual on Oct. 31 of each year. Excess annual leave is allowed to accumulate and carry over from pay period to pay period until Oct. 31.

Employees need to look at their annual-leave balance and project what will be accrued and taken between now and October. If the projection shows you will be over your maximum annual leave allowed, it is time to start planning to take some time off. Please talk to your supervisor before requesting annual leave. It is the responsibility of all employees to monitor their annual-leave balances.

When a staff member ends state employment either by retirement or resignation, only the amount of annual leave accrued up to the maximum allowed will be paid.

Any annual leave accrued over the maximum at the time of separation will be lost, or it could be donated to the shared leave pool.

Family and Medical Leave

Family and Medical Leave (FML) provides for up to 12 weeks of job-protected unpaid leave within a 12-month period to salaried and wage employees. To be eligible, employees must have worked for the state of Missouri for at least 12 months and have at least 1,250 hours of actual work time in the 12 months immediately preceding the leave.

FML may be used under the following conditions:

- the birth of a child
- the placement (adoption or foster care) of a child with the employee
- the care for a spouse, son, daughter or parent of the employee when the spouse, son, daughter or parent has a serious health condition
- the serious health condition of an employee.

(For a detailed definition of a serious health condition, refer to Personnel Policy 200-235.)

Taking FML is not an option; employees are required to notify their supervisors of any situations that might qualify for FML. After it is determined an employee qualifies for FML, a letter with forms is sent to the employee for completion. Any leave taken for the qualifying event would then be coded as FML. Any available sick, annual or compensatory leave is used concurrently with an employee's 12-week FML entitlement. FML is unpaid leave if no leave is available.

If an employee is on an approved leave of absence and FML, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) continues to provide the department's share of health-insurance coverage for salaried employees participating in state-sponsored health plans. If salaried employees pay any part of the premium, those payments must continue to be paid personally by the employees.

The Department does not provide state-sponsored life insurance at no cost to the employees during

FML. Employees have the option of continuing this coverage at their own expense.

DESE Ambassador Awards Program

The following employees had anniversaries falling in the second quarter of 2006. They were honored at the DESE Ambassadors ceremony in July. Congratulations to all who were acknowledged for their dedicated service.

Five Years Service

Marian Avey – Central Office
Stephanie Jennings – Delmar Cobble
LeRoy Mitchell – Dale M. Thompson/
Trails West
Patricia Schmutzler – Dogwood Hills
Adam Williams – Maple Valley

10 Years Service

Gary DeVore – Delmar Cobble

20 Years Service

Frances M. Johnson – Gateway/Hubert
Wheeler

25 Years Service

Ruth Ann Dubus – Central Office

30 Years Service

Patricia M. Lucas – Gateway/Hubert
Wheeler

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

(All by Stephanie Brooks, Central Office)

Tuition Reimbursement Changes

There are two main changes in the tuition reimbursement program for 2006-07:

- The maximum reimbursable amount has increased from \$2,000 to \$2,500 per fiscal year.
- All eligible employees are limited to the maximum amount. There are no exceptions for teachers pursuing SDD certification or other employees completing required coursework.

This program is open to employees

on the former salary schedule (teachers and building administrators). Contact Stephanie Brooks at (573) 751-0706 for additional information.

Transition to Teaching Program

From 2002 to 2006, DESE sponsored the Transition to Teaching Program through the University of Missouri – St. Louis (UMSL). Beginning in 2006-07, the program will be sponsored by UMSL. This program offers accelerated courses in mild moderate cross-categorical studies for teachers holding a temporary authorization certificate.

For more details, contact Stephen Viola, director, at (314) 516-5332. You can also visit <http://umsl.edu/~conted/education/ttp/>.

Deafblindness Course

The Missouri Deafblind Technical Assistance Project and Missouri School for the Blind are offering a course titled "Hand in Hand: Understanding Deafblindness for Education Teams of Students Who Are Deafblind."

The course combines self-study, homework assignments and action planning with on-site mentoring and three face-to-face sessions with course instructors. The three on-site sessions will be in Springfield, Mo.

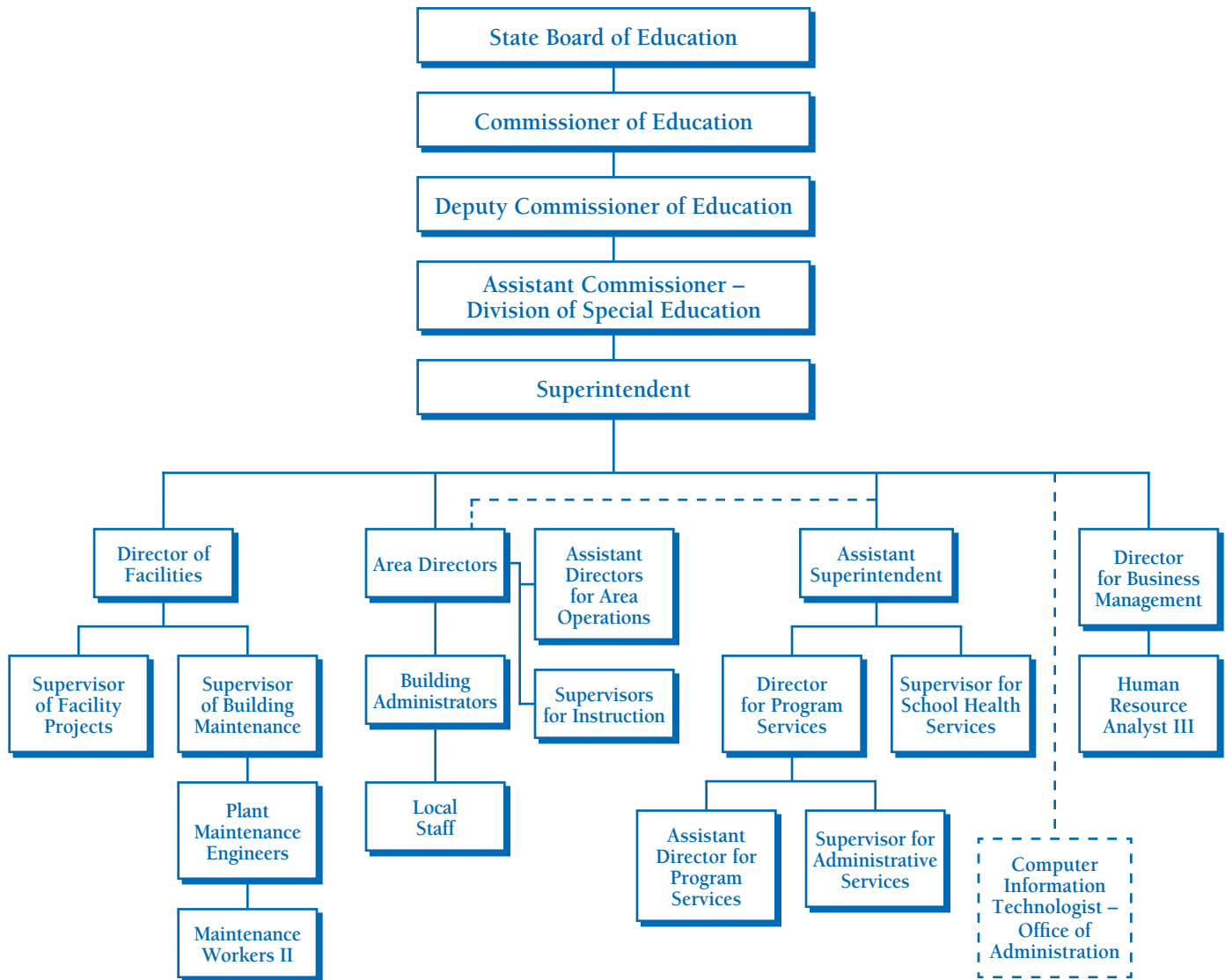
There is no charge for attending the course, and one free textbook will be provided. Educators desiring college credit can obtain two hours of credit through Lindenwood University for \$120.

Preference is being given to teams of educators (including parents), but individual teachers should contact Larry Rhodes, project coordinator, at (314) 776-4320, Ext. 255, to see if they can join the program. Parents attending with teachers will receive free lodging and financial assistance with travel and meal expenses.

For more information, go to <http://www.msb.k12.mo.us/> and click on the professional-development link. The registration deadline is Oct. 16. ♦

State Schools Organizational Chart

The chart below shows how you, as an employee, are associated with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). There are several divisions within DESE, and State Schools is part of the Division of Special Education. Under the Division of Special Education are sections, which include the three State Board operated programs — Missouri School for the Deaf (MSD), Missouri School for the Blind (MSB) and State Schools for Severely Handicapped (SSSH). You are classified as a DESE employee working for Special Education under State Schools. ♦



STATE SCHOOLS FOR SEVERELY HANDICAPPED Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

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Web site: <http://dese.mo.gov/divspeced/stateschools>

NOTE: If you have items of interest for Staff Highlights, please call (573) 751-0706, (800) 735-2966 (Missouri Relay) or forward them to Stephanie Brooks, State Schools for Severely Handicapped, P.O. Box 480, Jefferson City, MO 65102-0480; or send an e-mail to stephanie.brooks@dese.mo.gov.